



PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION (CEOM) TO GENERAL ELECTIONS OF SURINAME 25 MAY 2010

The CARICOM Observer Mission, which was sent to Suriname to observe the May 25th General Elections, comprised eleven (11) members. The team, headed by Mr. Michael N. Flood of Saint Lucia, arrived in Suriname on Thursday 20th May 2010 and got into action immediately after settling down. Meetings were held with relevant authorities and stakeholders prior to polling day. It is interesting to note that everyone was satisfied with the preparations leading up to the Elections and expressed their confidence in the Independent Electoral Council to manage this election.

On Election Day, the team was divided into five (5) groups and were deployed to seven (7) polling districts. Team (1) – comprised of Mr. Gocool Boodoo and Ms. Karen Manwarren – went to the districts of Coronie and Nickerie, with a total of (40) polling stations. Team (2), including Mr. Eugene Petty and Ms. Carole Maison-Bishop, went to the districts of Saramacca and Wanica, with 127 polling stations. Team (3) – comprised of Dr. Raghunath Mahabir and Mr. Alan Donawa – visited the Commewijne and Marowijne districts with a total of (57) polling stations. Two teams were deployed to Paramaribo, the most populated district of Suriname, with total of (263) polling stations. Mr. Hensley Robinson and Mr. Glasspole Brown were assigned to one half of the polling stations in Paramaribo, whilst the team of Mr. Michael N, Flood, Ms. Sandiria Hall and Mr. Lingham Samuel undertook to visit the other half.

The teams were out early enough to witness the opening of the polls at eleven different polling stations, where all teams reported incident-free openings. All reports indicate that polling stations visited opened on time at 7:00 a.m. with the relevant officials present. The usual checks were done in full view of everyone present to ensure the boxes were empty and then sealed prior to any votes being cast. During the day, the teams stayed in contact to give updates. The observation exercise was challenging as it rained in most areas and the terrain became difficult for some. But the observers maintained the course as they visited and observed the process in as many stations as possible.

The Observer Mission is pleased to note that although Observers were not able to visit the interior of Suriname, as it is only accessible by boat or by air, the various teams were able to visit 267 polling stations out of a total of 580. This should be taken as a task well done. During these visits, Observers asked questions and had discussions with Electoral Officials and the electors alike, and also paid close attention to the voting process from the time voters walked into the stations, until they left. In some cases, Observers were able to witness Officials redirecting people to the correct polling stations - all incident free.

At the closing of the polls, Observers monitored how the lines were managed, and that too went incident free. Observers witnessed the counting of the ballots at separate stations, which went well through the night and in some cases into the early hours of the morning. Nevertheless, the Observers stayed to ensure that the process was carried out in a fair and transparent manner.

The team is of the view that the people of Suriname must be commended for their maturity throughout their General Election. It was interesting to note that people of opposing parties were eating, laughing and sitting together, although they numbered in the hundreds in the area outside the polling area. Based on our observations, the CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission is of the view that all was in place, and the authorities conducted the business of the day freely, fairly and transparently. The voters were able to cast their ballots without intimidation and or interference. The Mission is of the opinion that the election was conducted freely and fairly and the people of Suriname must be commended for that.

The observer team would like to extend sincere appreciation to the people of Suriname for their hospitality, the relevant authorities and especially to the police and drivers who were professional and accommodating during its stay in Suriname.

A comprehensive report of the mission will be submitted to the CARICOM Secretariat within twenty one (21) days, at which time the Mission shall report on its findings and offer its recommendations.

Regards

Michael N Flood
Chief of Mission